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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001701

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 3/20/2003

TAGS: [AEMR](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [CVIS](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: TFIZO1: AMMAN SITREP 3 (3/20 2000 LOCAL)

REF: FBIS GMP20030320000185

CLASSIFIED BY:AMBASSADOR EDWARD W. GNEHM. REASONS 1.5(B,D)

General Overview

1. (C) As of 2000 local time (1800 GMT) the situation in Jordan remains calm. A steady rain throughout the day has kept many people off the streets. A demonstration not sanctioned by the GOJ (numbering in the low hundreds) has begun at the Professional Associations Complex in the Shmeisani area of Amman and is continuing at this time. According to an Embassy contact and a media report (which the PSD has not confirmed), there were some scuffles between the protesters and GOJ security during the course of the protest.

2. (C) The Director of the GOJ's Karameh crossing with Iraq told the official Petra News Service that the flow of travelers from Iraq has been "within normal rates," and totaled about 4,200 for the day, mostly Jordanians and individuals from other Arab countries (ref). UNHCR reports that as of 1600 (local), 350 third country nationals (TCNs) had crossed into Jordan from Iraq. The MFA believes a Jordanian taxi driver, Ahmad Walid Ragheb, was killed in Western Iraq. Oil tanker truck traffic appears to be slowing significantly. During a 2 1/2 hour period 3/20, a DATT officer sighted only 21 trucks crossing the border, 1/3 to 1/2 of the rate on a normal day. The GOJ has set up approximately 15 checkpoints on the road from Azraq to the border, and declared the Eastern Zone within the Ruweished District a closed zone. No access into the region will be allowed without a permit from the Crisis Management Center of the Interior Ministry.

Consular Issues

3. (C) As of 2000, we have not received any reports of Amcits crossing into Jordan from Iraq. GOJ border officials have told UNHCR officials at the border that Amcits with proper identification would be allowed to travel directly to Amman.

GOJ Actions/Statements

3. (C) King Abdullah chaired a meeting of the State Security Council at the General Intelligence Directorate (GID) Headquarters during the afternoon. According to the official Petra News Service, the King told the council "what worries us most is the suffering of the Iraqis and the catastrophic situation they are passing through . . . we will not spare any effort to shoulder our humanitarian duties towards the Iraqi people with a view to ease their suffering and overcome the effects of war." PM Abul Ragheb affirmed that the GOJ will enforce the law and will not allow anyone to violate it.

Security

4. (C) Cooperation with all GOJ security agencies continues to be excellent. Additional security measures around the Embassy remain in place.

Refugee/Humanitarian Issues

5. (U) UNHCR Senior Logistics Officer Douglas Osmond reports that 350 TCNs (mostly Sudanese and a few Egyptians) have been screened, identified, placed on buses with police escorts and taken directly to the IOM/JRCS transit camp in Ruweished. No Iraqi asylum seekers have thus far sought to enter Jordan. Of the 34 TCNs (again mostly Sudanese) that were detained at the border during the course of the day due to inadequate documentation, 15 were later cleared for entry into Jordan (to the Ruweished TCN transit camp) and 19 are still under review. UNHCR has set up three tents at the border for these individuals and IOM is providing them with food and water. UNHCR also reports that approximately 100 meters beyond the last GOJ border post (and still within no-man's land), the GOJ has leveled off an area that could be used for a

campsite. The JRCS has erected 10 tents there and is putting in latrines and a water supply. As of this report, UNHCR did not know the purpose for this new campsite. UNHCR has been very satisfied with its degree of access at the border.

Press

16. (C) IO attended opening of UK government's press information center at an Amman hotel. FCO briefer and UK Ambassador provided official statements and some background commentary to assembled international press. Separately, the UN opened a briefing press briefing center, which intends daily briefings for international press on regional UN activities. The majority of international press (including representatives of all major US TV and print media) resident in Jordan have relocated from Amman to Ruweished near the Iraqi border. The GOJ has allowed journalists to operate there and to cover humanitarian and refugee issues at the Iraq/Jordan border. The interest of the great majority of these journalists remains, however, gaining access to Iraq at such a time that it becomes safe to do so.
GNEHM